

Respiratory tract infections (RTIs)

A step-by-step guide on how to manage your infection

What is an RTI?

A respiratory tract infection (RTI) occurs in the upper or lower respiratory tract, causing symptoms. A RTI is usually caused by a virus, but can sometimes be bacterial.

What are some common symptoms of an RTI?

Nasal cavity

- Blocked or runny nose

Sinuses

- Pain
- Swelling

Lungs

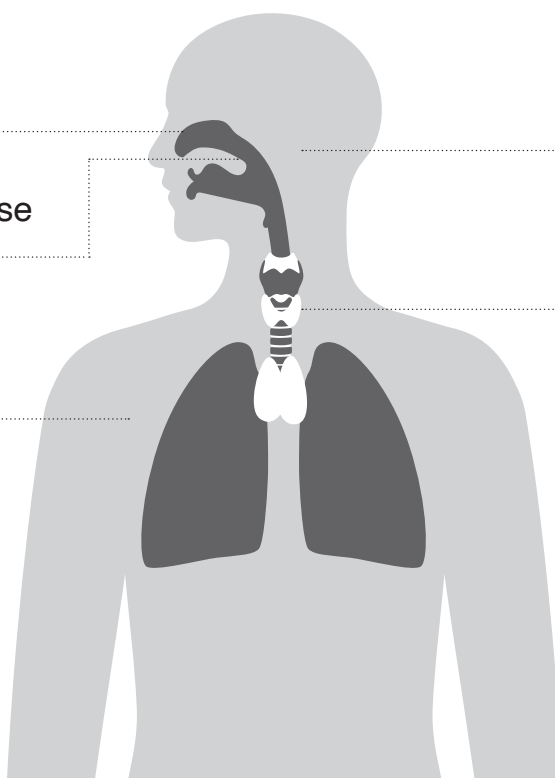
- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Coughing up mucus

Ears

- Earache

Throat

- Sore throat
- Swollen tonsils



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Help yourself to feel better

Whatever your infection, you can do the following to help.



Take paracetamol to reduce pain. Always follow the instructions on the packet.



Ask your pharmacist for advice on reducing your symptoms.



Get plenty of rest until you feel better.



Drink enough fluids to avoid feeling thirsty.



Use tissues when you sneeze to help stop infections spreading.



Wash your hands regularly and after using tissues.

For more information, visit the NHS website at www.nhs.uk. Most common infections get better without antibiotics. Find out how you can make better use of antibiotics at www.antibioticguardian.com.

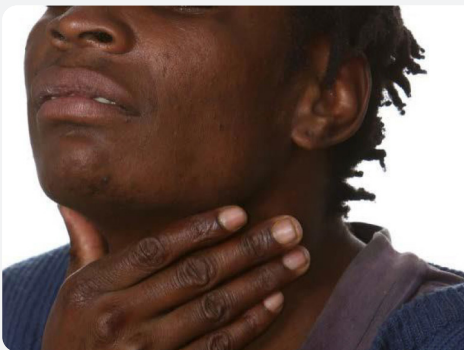
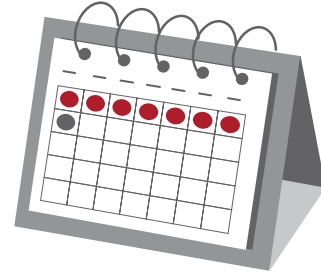
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Check how long your symptoms last



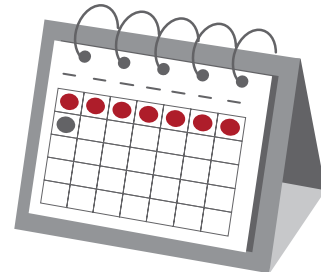
Earache

Most get better
by **3 days** (can
last 7 to 8 days)



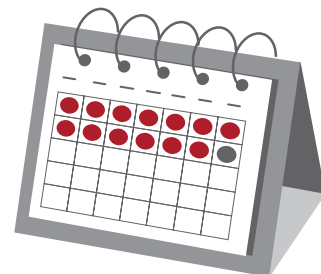
Sore throat

Most get better
by **7 to 8 days**



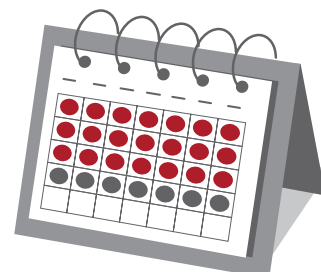
Cold

Most get better
by **14 days**



Cough

Most get better
by **3 to 4 weeks**

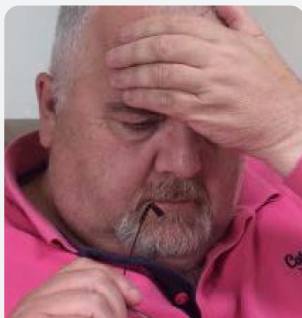


If you are not starting to improve a little by the times given above, visit a pharmacist or contact your GP practice. If you are feeling a lot worse, phone **NHS 111** or **NHS 24** (see step 4).

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Look out for serious symptoms

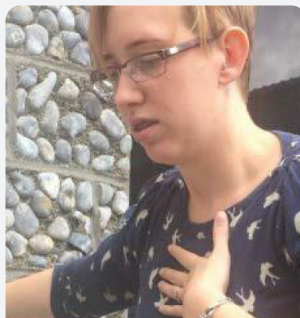
If you have an infection and develop any of the symptoms below, **you should see a doctor urgently**. Ring your **GP practice** or call **NHS 111** or **NHS 24**.



Severe headache



Very cold skin



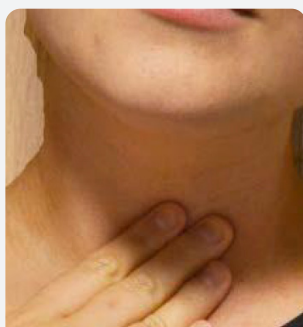
Trouble breathing



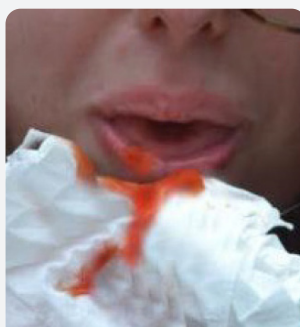
Feeling confused



Chest pain



Problems swallowing



Coughing blood



Feeling a lot worse

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Where to get help

NHS England



when it's less urgent than 999

**NHS 111
Wales**

NHS 111 *Wales*

NHS Scotland



**Northern
Ireland**

Contact your
GP practice



Public Health
Agency

If you have an **emergency**, call 999 immediately